



# KENTVILLE TOWN COUNCIL

## Special Meeting

### Deed Transfer Bylaw (Proposed Second Reading)

### 4:00 p.m. – June 16, 2009

#### **PRESENT**

Mayor David Corkum, Deputy Mayor Bernie Cooper, Councilor Mark Pearl, Councilor Eric Bolland, Councilor Nola Folker-Hill (arrived 4:06 p.m.), Councilor Bill Boyd, Councilor Tony Bentley, CAO Keith Robicheau, Solicitor Peter Muttart, Town Clerk Carol Harmes

Staff: Finance Director Deb Crowell, Director of Public Works Greg Kehoe, Director of Planning and Development Bev Gentleman, Director of Parks and Recreation Mark Phillips

#### **CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Corkum called the meeting to order and CAO Robicheau reported that all Council members were in attendance with the exception of Councilor Nola Folker-Hill

#### **DEED TRANSFER TAX BYLAW – Chapter 69**

It was noted that First Reading was given to the Deed Transfer Tax Bylaw at a meeting of Town Council on May 20, 2009. In accordance with the approval process as identified in the Municipal Government Act, a notice of Second Reading was placed in the local paper and ran in the publications of May 26, June 2, 9 and 11, 2009

Following this, a Public Meeting was held at 7:00 p.m. on June 15<sup>th</sup>, at which some 40 individuals attended, some of whom expressed their concern and disapproval with this bylaw. Written submissions were also received and were reviewed for the record. A discussion took place in view of the public input from the June 15<sup>th</sup> meeting.

It was moved by Councilor Bill Boyd and seconded by Councilor Eric Bolland

**that Second Reading be given to the Deed Transfer Tax Bylaw – Chapter 69.**

Following discussion, an amendment was proposed by Councilor Mark Pearl and seconded by Councilor Bill Boyd

**that this motion be deferred until the July Council Meeting.**

**MOTION CARRIED**

Points from Discussion

- Council needs to find \$200,000 to balance the budget at the current tax rate.
- All options must be examined. Council has made several tough budget decisions; additional revenue is needed or staff numbers will need to be reduced.
- An 8% to 10% increase in taxes would apply to the average homeowner.
- Many residents are struggling to keep their homes and can't pay any more taxes.
- Expenditures like grants to organizations have to be revisited.
- It is Council's prerogative to revisit the budget at any time.
- Most towns in Nova Scotia have a Deed Transfer Tax bylaw in place.
- Many people aren't aware of the impact that this Deed Transfer Tax will have on them, or that the Town is considering increasing residential and business taxes.
- The Town of Stellarton introduced a Deed Transfer Tax and saw zero growth for the 2 years following its implementation.
- Those individuals responding to the Deed Transfer Tax meeting last evening, stated that they preferred to have the tax rates raised, or for Council to find other ways to reduce expenses.
- Private homeowners were in the audience last evening and represent that demographic.
- Revenue from this Deed Transfer Tax is unknown.
- Some of those individuals in the audience on June 15<sup>th</sup>, had incorrect information on which they were basing their opinion.
- The general public should be surveyed.
- A research firm is based here in Kentville and other companies also exist, that could gather this type of

APPROVED BY COUNCIL – July 15, 2009

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- information (random sampling).
- An in-house brochure and questionnaire could be sent to all households.
  - People could be directed to the Town’s website for additional information.
  - Council should approve the questionnaire prior to having it used.
  - A town hall type of meeting could be set up to hear all feedback and to answer any questions citizens might have, perhaps during the week of July 21, 22.
  - Budget meetings are public meetings and enough information has been in the press to educate people in the Town.
  - There has not been a balanced discussion.
  - The elimination of all grants would result in only 1.5% and there still would be a need for programs and service cuts.
  - It might be appropriate to have Deed Transfer Tax revisions made on such things like exemptions to first time homeowners and the graduated introduction of percentages as the cost of the home escalates.
  - Council needs to give direction to staff as to what type of information should be included in the public information.
  - It is important to contact the residents and make every effort to word the “question” properly, so as to not direct the outcome.
  - The Council Meeting in July should be postponed to allow time to gather and analyze this information.

It was moved by Councilor Tony Bentley and seconded by Councilor Eric Bolland

**that the July 8<sup>th</sup> regular meeting of Town Council be postponed to July 15.**

**MOTION CARRIED**

**ADJOURNMENT**

It was moved by Councilor Eric Bolland that the meeting adjourn at 5:30 p.m.